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Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with the request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-fourth session,** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts. The Commission is requested to comment on the points for discussion included in paragraph 37 therein.

* E/CN.3/2004/1.

** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 4* (E/2003/24), chap. I.A, para. 1.

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Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts

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Introduction

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the Statistical Commission:

(a) Endorsed the scope of the updating process with a view to maintaining the fundamentals of the current *System of National Accounts, 1993* (1993 SNA)[1] and its consistency with related publications like the fifth edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual*,[2] the *Government Finance Statistics Manual, 2001*,[3] and the *Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual*;[4]

(b) Supported the three criteria for identifying issues for updating and recommended the inclusion of two additional criteria, namely, user needs and feasibility;

(c) Endorsed the managing and coordinating role of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts in the updating process with the assistance of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, requested that a detailed project document be prepared to describe the updating of the 1993 SNA including its agenda, work programme, timetable, governance, resource implications and decision-making process and the delineation of the role of the Advisory Expert Group, and advised the Intersecretariat Working Group to circulate the document for inputs to member countries;

(d) Also endorsed the list of issues to be updated and recommended that it be open-ended so as to include additional items like consumer durables, treatment of military equipment, and return on capital assets of general government in order to ensure full accounting on general government;

(e) Further endorsed the targeted publication date of 2008 for the updated System of National Accounts but considered too optimistic the deadline of 2005 for the conclusions to be submitted to the Commission and suggested that this deadline be moved to mid-2006;

(f) Noted the concerns of some member countries about the decision-making process regarding past submissions of solutions by the Intersecretariat Working Group to the Commission and recognized the desirability of arriving at solutions in a spirit of compromise ensuring a thorough analysis of issues by set deadlines;

(g) Also noted the concerns of developing countries and international bodies about the challenges met in the implementation of the current 1993 SNA and the need to maintain international comparability;

(h) Emphasized the need to widen the participation of member States in the updating process;

(i) Urged for timely translation of the officially approved document in all the official languages of the United Nations.

2. Section I below addresses the request of the Commission at its thirty-fourth session that a detailed project document be prepared to describe the updating of the 1993 SNA. Section II provides an assessment of the implementation of the 1993 SNA. Annexes I-III present supporting information on the status of SNA implementation; and annex IV presents a list of manuals and handbooks prepared in support of SNA implementation by Intersecretariat Working Group member organizations.

I. Work programme for the 2008 update of the System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA)

A. Background

3. Changes in the economic environment necessitate a continuous updating of the *System of National Accounts, 1993* (1993 SNA) to ensure and maintain its relevance. Therefore, initially an incremental updating mechanism had been implemented, as approved by the Statistical Commission in 1999. However, increasingly it was felt that prospective changes to the 1993 SNA should be more extensively dealt with so as to ensure the integrity and consistency of the System as a whole. In response to this view, in 2002 the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts reviewed the existing incremental updating mechanism, the scope of updating, the list of issues raised by experts, the role of an Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, the consultations through city groups, task forces and electronic discussion groups, the consultations and outreach to countries to ensure a broad engagement during the updating process, and the timetable of the updating process.

4. The proposal of the Intersecretariat Working Group for updating the SNA was adopted by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-fourth session in 2003. At the same session, the Commission endorsed the scope of updating and the managing and coordinating role of the Intersecretariat Working Group assisted by the Advisory Expert Group. In accordance with the Commission's request, a detailed project document was prepared and circulated to the members of the Commission in July 2003 (see para. 23 for a summary of comments by countries). The main contents of the document are summarized in the present section. The full project document is available as a background document, entitled "Work programme for the updating of the 1993 SNA", which incorporates the comments received from members of the Commission.

B. Issues in the agenda for updating the SNA and criteria for selection

5. The Commission at its thirty-fourth session approved and amended an open-ended list of issues for updating the 1993 SNA. (The list of issues was included in document E/CN.3/2003/9, annex II.) The list of issues may be further expanded on the basis of recommendations by countries subject to approval by the Advisory Expert Group.

6. During the updating of the 1993 SNA, the eligibility criteria for adding candidate issues to the list of issues for review and the subsequent recommendations to be considered for updating should reflect the following provisions:

(a) The issue does not lead to fundamental or comprehensive changes to the 1993 SNA that would impede the process of its implementation, which in many countries has not yet been achieved;

(b) The updating should encompass emerging issues in the new economic environment;

(c) The review of the issue is widely demanded by users and supported by the majority of experts of an expert group;

(d) The issue could be an (old) issue that was discussed and rejected in the 1993 revision process but one that warrants a new review in light of the latest developments in the economic environment owing to their economic significance and/or to advances in methodological research and practices;

(e) The recommendations for change consist of a single consistent solution;

(f) The recommendations for change are assessed for internal consistency with respect to the SNA and external consistency with related manuals such as the fifth edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual*, the *Government Finance Statistics Manual, 2001*, the *Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual* etc.;

(g) The recommendations for change address the aspects of implementation in countries.

C. Outputs

7. The updating process will produce intermediate and final outputs. Intermediate outputs are recommendations from expert groups submitted to the Advisory Expert Group, consolidated comments and decisions on the recommendations taken by the Advisory Expert Group, and consolidated comments and suggestions of member countries following the circulation of documents within a 60-day response period.

8. The final output, the 1993 SNA, Rev.1, will be submitted to the Statistical Commission for adoption in 2008. Its first draft will be circulated to member countries for verification and readability by mid-2007.

D. Governance and decision-making process

1. Roles of main actors

9. As approved by the Statistical Commission, the Intersecretariat Working Group, assisted by the Advisory Expert Group, is responsible for managing and coordinating the updating process. Moreover, the United Nations Statistics Division, as the secretariat of the Intersecretariat Working Group, provides secretarial support to the updating process. Ensuring smooth progress and a broad country engagement during this process will be an important task for the Statistics Division. The senior management of the five organizations constituting the Intersecretariat Working Group provide collective oversight and liaise with senior-level representatives of countries and international organizations.

10. For the efficient execution of the governance and decision-making process, the Advisory Expert Group takes decisions on the scope of the updating and on technical and conceptual issues in conjunction with the Intersecretariat Working Group. A comprehensive list of candidate issues to be considered for updating has been put in the agenda of the first meeting of the Advisory Expert Group in February 2004 for approval.

11. Issues are first deliberated by various existing expert groups, such as the Canberra II Group on the Measurement of Non-financial Assets, other city groups, regional meetings, electronic discussion groups, and possibly new expert groups. The terms of reference for every existing expert group have been formulated with deadlines and a moderator to monitor the discussions and to prepare the conclusions

to be submitted to the Intersecretariat Working Group. The recommendations of these groups of experts will then be forwarded to the Advisory Expert Group for discussion and final decision. The moderator or chairman of the expert groups is responsible for the preparation of the recommendations of the groups.

12. The reports setting out the recommendations for changes, which may include clarification beyond disputes, interpretation and real conceptual changes, should be formulated through a clear-cut agreement of a majority of experts. Also, the reports on the recommendations by the expert groups should provide a single solution to an issue, include the reasons for changes and indicate the paragraphs of the current 1993 SNA that need to be revised in order to facilitate the deliberation and rewriting process. Moreover, the reports should consider aspects of implementation in a number of countries. Only the recommendations for changes approved by the majority of experts in the expert groups should be submitted to the Advisory Expert Group for approval. Nevertheless, reports for all issues considered for updating (as determined by the Advisory Expert Group at its first meeting) should be presented to the Advisory Expert Group no later than its meeting in November 2005. For those issues where the expert group has decided that no change is warranted or where no agreement has been possible, the report should briefly summarize the proposals considered and the views expressed that led to the particular outcome.

13. The Advisory Expert Group will deliberate on the recommendations of the expert groups (see appendices 3 and 4 of the background document for the terms of reference and list of experts of the Advisory Expert Group) and propose for each one a final recommendation for clarification or change of the SNA. The Advisory Expert Group will strive for consensus to the greatest extent possible. There will be voting if necessary, through written consultations or during its meetings. Those entitled to vote include the Advisory Expert Group and the Intersecretariat Working Group (25 voting members). Its recommendations will be circulated by the Statistics Division on behalf of the Intersecretariat Working Group to countries and/or regional meetings for discussion, and the final results will be consolidated by the Intersecretariat Working Group. To ensure smooth progress, issues on which general agreement has emerged will not be further discussed, unless inconsistency with decisions on other issues requires further deliberation. The Statistics Division on behalf of the Intersecretariat Working Group should play a key role in ensuring proper outreach and reaching closure.

14. Throughout the updating process of the 1993 SNA, the Intersecretariat Working Group and the Advisory Expert Group will assess and evaluate consistency with the revision of the fifth edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual* and, to the extent possible, with the *Government Finance Statistics Manual, 2001*. To this end, the Intersecretariat Working Group will liaise with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Committee on Balance of Payments and the International Task Force on Harmonization of Public Sector Accounting. A well-established coordination mechanism has been put in place consisting of (a) coordination within and between the international organizations, (b) inclusion of the fifth edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual* and *Government Finance Statistics Manual, 2001* issues in the agendas of expert group meetings and (c) inclusion of these consistency coordination issues in the agendas of the meetings of the Advisory Expert Group. Coordination and alignment with the timetable of the IMF Committee on Balance of Payments on the revision of the fifth edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual* should also ensure parallel progress with the review of the 1993 SNA. Consistency

will also be ensured with the revisions of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and the Central Product Classification (CPC) through similar coordination mechanisms. Attention will also be paid to the relationship between the SNA and business accounting standards.

15. The appointment of a project manager is planned to assist the Intersecretariat Working Group in managing the updating process including drawing up of time schedules, monitoring resource use and needs, coordinating the contributions of the various expert groups, liaising with the working groups on the revision of the Balance of Payments and Government Finance Statistics manuals etc. The project manager would prepare reports to the Intersecretariat Working Group on a regular basis. In the execution of the tasks, the project manager would be working closely with the Statistics Division as the secretariat of the Intersecretariat Working Group. It is expected that the project manager would need to work approximately half-time throughout the four years (2004-2007) of the project.

16. The drafting of recommendations for changes to be submitted to the Statistical Commission and the rewriting of the 1993 SNA will be the main responsibility of an editor. In the earlier part of the updating period, the editor will oversee the conceptual consistency of the various emerging proposals. The editor is expected to work approximately half-time during 2004-2005 and then full-time in 2006-2007. Both the project manager and the editor will work under the supervision of the Intersecretariat Working Group. They will be paid from a trust fund set up on behalf of the Intersecretariat Working Group to finance the SNA updating process. Member countries have been approached by the international organizations of the Intersecretariat Working Group and requested to contribute to this trust fund.

17. The project manager and the editor will be selected by the senior management of the international organizations represented in the Intersecretariat Working Group from among internationally respected senior statisticians; the editor is also required to be a recognized expert in national accounts. (The terms of reference of the project manager and editor are provided in appendix 5 of the background document entitled "Work programme for the updating of the 1993 SNA".) A letter with a request to identify suitable candidates has been dispatched on behalf of the Intersecretariat Working Group to the heads of national statistical offices and the governors of central banks. In addition, a call for candidates was placed in *SNA News and Notes* and on the web sites of the five international organizations constituting the Intersecretariat Working Group.

2. Outreach and country consultations

18. The senior management of the five international organizations of the Intersecretariat Working Group are committed to a transparent review process which has broad support in the statistical community. For this purpose, the senior management of national statistical organizations have been requested to engage in all phases and at all levels. The important role of national accounts data in developing and monitoring economic policies calls for active involvement of both national and international organizations. Because of the role of national accounts data as point of reference for many other statistics and because national accounts and other macroeconomic statistics in many countries are produced outside the statistical offices, outreach should be broadened to include all producers of statistics, including central banks. To ensure country involvement and general

transparency, all documents for discussion in the meetings of the Intersecretariat Working Group with the Advisory Expert Group will be publicly accessible through the Intersecretariat Working Group web site. These documents include preparatory papers, minutes of meetings, and conclusions. After each Advisory Expert Group meeting, the conclusions on proposed changes will be circulated to all States Members of the United Nations for their review, within a 60-day response period (see also table 2 on the role of countries in the various phases of the SNA updating process).

E. Timetable

19. The deliberations and consultations on issues in the updating process have been planned during the period 2003-2008 according to the following timetable:

(a) Deliberations on specific issues will be carried out initially through expert groups that include electronic discussion groups, city groups, regional meetings and the Canberra II Group on the Measurement of Non-financial Assets during the 2003-2005 period. Depending on the list of issues finalized in the first meeting of the Advisory Expert Group, other expert groups may be created. Tentative conclusions will be circulated for comments to other regional and international expert group meetings on national accounts. Recommendations of the expert groups will be forwarded to the Intersecretariat Working Group for presentation for discussion and approval at the meetings of the Advisory Expert Group;

(b) The Advisory Expert Group will meet three times in 2004 and 2005 to deliberate on the recommendations of the expert groups. A voting procedure is a possibility for reaching decisions (see the terms of reference of the Advisory Expert Group in appendix 3 to the above-mentioned background document). An additional meeting of the Advisory Expert Group is planned in May 2006 for a review of the mutual consistency of the recommendations on the updated issues and the overall integrity of the System. A final meeting will be held in 2007 to adopt the proposed changes, taking account of countries' comments. Tentatively, in total, five meetings of the Advisory Expert Group are planned;

(c) The recommendations of the Advisory Expert Group will be sent to countries for comments after each meeting in the period 2004-2005;

(d) Consolidated recommendations for changes will be circulated to countries for comments in 2006 and submitted by the Intersecretariat Working Group in tandem with the Advisory Expert Group for approval by the Commission in March 2007;

(e) A complete draft of the 1993 SNA, Rev.1, will be sent to countries in May 2007 for comments on consistency and readability;

(f) The final draft of the 1993 SNA, Rev.1, will be submitted to the Commission for approval in March 2008.

20. The timetable of the work programme is summarized in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1
Timetable for the 2008 update of the 1993 SNA

	2003-2005	*May 2006*	*October 2006*	*March 2007*	*May 2007*	*May-October 2007*	*October 2007*	*March 2008*
Recommendations of all expert groups	• Work carried out throughout the period • Recommendations circulated to the Advisory Expert Group for approval as soon as they are ready • Recommendations of the Advisory Expert Group sent to countries for comments as soon as they are ready							
Consolidated recommendations of the Advisory Expert Group		All recommendations are reviewed for consistency by the Advisory Expert Group and circulated to countries for review	Sent to Statistical Commission for approval	Statistical Commission session				
First draft of SNA, Rev.1					Complete draft sent to countries for comments on consistency and readability	Intersecretariat Working Group review		
Final draft of SNA, Rev.1							Intersecretariat Working Group and Advisory Expert Group approval	Statistical Commission approval

Table 2
Work schedule of main actors of the SNA updating process

	Work programme of the electronic discussion groups	*Meetings of the Canberra II group*	*Meetings of the Advisory Expert Group*	*Intersecretariat Working Group*	*Countries*
2003	Discussions through electronic discussion groups[a]	**15-17 April, Voorburg, Netherlands** **Agenda:** 1. Cost of ownership transfer 2. Military assets 3. Treatment of originals and copies 4. Classification of assets and terminology 5. Leases and licences 6. Research and development (plus impact on patented entities) **13-15 October, Paris** **Agenda:** 1. Cost of ownership transfer 2. Military assets 3. Treatment of originals and copies 4. Databases: clarify 5. Mineral exploration 6. Cost of capital services in production account 7. Government-owned assets: cost of capital services 8. Treatment of land 9. Classification of assets and terminology 10. Leases and licences 11. Research and development (plus impact on patented entities) 12. Obsolescence/ depreciation 13. Purchased goodwill and other intangible non-produced assets (trademarks, brand names and franchises) 14. Build-own-operate-transfer (BOOT) schemes		Organize meetings and prepare documentation for Advisory Expert Group meetings Dispatch invitations for nominations, initiate selection process and appointments of project manager and editor Coordination of SNA update with the revision of Balance of Payments Manual, Government Finance Statistics Manual, ISIC and CPC, and the relationship with business accounting practices	Deliberations through electronic discussion groups; Intersecretariat Working Group participation of invited experts in Canberra II and Advisory Expert Group

	Work programme of the electronic discussion groups	*Meetings of the Canberra II group*	*Meetings of the Advisory Expert Group*	*Intersecretariat Working Group*	*Countries*
2004	Same as above	**March 2004, Washington, D.C., and September 2004** **Agenda:** 1. Treatment of originals and copies 2. Databases: clarify 3. Mineral exploration: clarify 4. Cost of capital services in production account: presentation 5. Government-owned assets: cost of capital services 6. Treatment of land 7. Net domestic product (NDP) instead of gross domestic product (GDP) 8. Cultivated assets: clarify 9. Borderline between rent/rental and sale 10. Definition of economic assets: should we add a criterion of "reliability of measurement"? 11. Classification of assets and terminology 12. Leases and licences 13. Research and development (plus impact on patented entities) 14. Obsolescence/ depreciation 15. Purchased goodwill and other intangible non-produced assets (trademarks, brand names and franchises) 16. BOOT schemes 17. Asset boundary for non-produced intangible assets 18. Amortization of intangible non-produced assets 19. Treatment of water	**16-20 February 2004** **Agenda:** List of issues to be reviewed for SNA, Rev.1, and discussions of: 1. Treatment of interest under conditions of high inflation 2. Unfunded pension schemes for government employees 3. Employee stock option plans 4. Treatment of non-performing loans 5. Insurance/reinsurance 6. Allocation of financial intermediation services indirectly measured 7. Taxes on holding gains 8. Cost of ownership transfer 9. Military assets **November 2004** **Tentative agenda:** 1. Treatment of originals and copies 2. Databases: clarify 3. Mineral exploration: clarify 4. Cost of capital services in production account: presentation 5. Government-owned assets: cost of capital services 6. Treatment of land 7. Net domestic product (NDP) instead of gross domestic product (GDP) 8. Cultivated assets: clarify 9. Borderline between rent/rental and sale 10. Definition of economic assets: should we add a criterion of "reliability of measurement"? 11. Repurchase agreements 12. Financial services	Organize meetings and prepare documentation for Advisory Expert Group meetings Coordination of SNA update with the revision of Balance of Payments Manual, Government Finance Statistics Manual, ISIC and CPC, and the relationship with business accounting practices	Same as above Advisory Expert Group recommendations circulated to countries for comments within 60-day response period

	Work programme of the electronic discussion groups	*Meetings of the Canberra II group*	*Meetings of the Advisory Expert Group*	*Intersecretariat Working Group*	*Countries*
2005	Same as above	**March/September 2005** **Agenda:** 1. Classification of assets and terminology 2. Leases and licences 3. Research and development (plus impact on patented entities) 4. Obsolescence/ depreciation 5. Purchased goodwill and other intangible non-produced assets (trademarks, brand names and franchises) 6. BOOT schemes 7. Asset boundary for non-produced intangible assets 8. Amortization of intangible non-produced assets 9. Treatment of water	**November 2005** **Tentative agenda:** 1. Classification of assets and terminology 2. Leases and licences 3. Research and development (plus impact on patented entities) 4. Obsolescence/ depreciation 5. Purchased goodwill and other intangible non-produced assets (trademarks, brand names and franchises) 6. BOOT schemes 7. Asset boundary for non-produced intangible assets 8. Amortization of intangible non-produced assets 9. Treatment of water	Same as above	Same as above Advisory Expert Group recommendations circulated to countries for comments within 60-day response period
2006			**May**: Review by the Advisory Expert Group of all recommendations and their mutual consistency	**October**: Advisory Expert Group recommendations submitted to the Statistical Commission for approval in March 2007	Recommendations circulated to countries for comments within 60-day response period
2007			Final meeting to adopt changes	**May**: First draft of the 1993 SNA, Rev.1 **October**: Final draft of the 1993 SNA, Rev.1, submitted to the Statistical Commission for approval in March 2008	Draft of 1993 SNA, Rev.1, circulated to countries for comments on consistency and readability
2008				**March**: Review by the Statistical Commission of the final draft	

[a] A description and Internet addresses of electronic discussion groups are provided in appendix 2 to the background document entitled "Work programme for the updating of the 1993 SNA" (21 November 2003).

F. Resource implications

1. Sources of financing

21. The updating process will be financed partly from contributions in kind by members of the Intersecretariat Working Group and partly from a trust fund. A detailed cost plan is provided in table 3 of the background document.

2. Trust fund

22. The trust fund will be set up to mainly finance the participation of experts from the developing countries in the meetings of the Advisory Expert Group, the activities of the project manager and the editor, some consultancies and the electronic version and index of the 1993 SNA, Rev.1. Member States are encouraged to contribute to the trust fund to complement contributions made by the members of the Intersecretariat Working Group.

G. Comments on the work programme received from members of the Commission

23. Fourteen out of 24 members of the Commission replied to the call for comments on the draft of the work programme for the updating of the 1993 SNA. Two members made no observations, 12 members approved the updating programme, and several sent specific comments. That some recommended an overall project manager of the programme has been taken into account in the work programme presented in this report. Several members recommended widening the participation of national statistical agencies in the 1993 SNA updating process. Others emphasized the consistency of the updated SNA with the Balance of Payments and Government Finance Statistics manuals. These views are also reflected in the work programme and the present report. One member expressed disagreement with the capitalization of research and development. Another disagreed with the capitalization of military weapons. A third member recommended the treatment of consumer durables in a satellite account. Some respondents also urged that reports of the recommendations be made available in official languages other than English.

II. Assessment of the implementation of the 1993 SNA

24. In order to better assess the extent of implementation of the 1993 SNA in countries, the Statistical Commission, at its thirty-second session, decided that the following three main dimensions would be examined: (a) compliance with the 1993 SNA concepts, (b) scope of the accounts and (c) quality issues.[5] Subsection A of the present section assesses the conceptual adherence, subsection B assesses the scope of implementation and subsection C refers to the quality issues.

A. Conceptual adherence to the 1993 SNA

25. Following the Commission's request that conceptual adherence should be taken into account in assessing the implementation of the 1993 SNA, the

Intersecretariat Working Group proposed a set of questions devised to assess the compliance with major 1993 SNA concepts. The Statistics Division, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), dispatched three conceptual questionnaires (CQs) in September of 2000, 2001 and 2002. The CQ used for 2002 is displayed in annex I. The survey covered all countries and territories, that is to say, developed, developing and transition economies.

26. In the assessment methodology, the CQ is the primary source for the evaluation of 1993 SNA conceptual implementation. In case a country had not returned the CQ, other sources of information were used such as written correspondence with the national authorities and metadata stored in the Statistics Division national accounts database.

27. It is relevant to note that countries have not fully implemented all the 1993 SNA concepts that affect gross domestic product (GDP). For example, countries may capitalize government defence expenditure on fixed assets that can be used for civilian purposes, but may not include consumption of fixed capital of all government fixed assets in the output of government services, or vice versa. In our final evaluation, a country was usually considered to be adherent to the 1993 SNA if that country had answered affirmatively to the questions considered important to their economy. For instance, for a country with a significant mineral sector to be classified as 1993 SNA-adherent, that country should have implemented the capitalization of mineral exploration. On the other hand, for a country with insignificant defence expenditure, the capitalization of military equipment that can be used for civilian purposes is not imperative. In this vein, for many developing countries, the absence of the capitalization of own-produced software is not taken into account in our evaluation.

28. A total of 57 developing countries and territories (37 per cent), 19 transition economies (70 per cent) and 14 developed countries (48 per cent) responded to the CQs. Table 3 summarizes the assessment of the 1993 SNA implementation. The main conclusions that can be drawn from the results are the following:

(a) A total of 84 out of 207 countries and territories have implemented the 1993 SNA. They account for 41 per cent of the total number of countries and territories, 56 per cent of world population and 92 per cent of world GDP;

(b) Among the States Members of the United Nations, developed countries and countries in transition have the highest level of implementation with 98-99 per cent of their GDP being calculated on the basis of the 1993 SNA;

(c) Only 26 per cent of the developing countries that are States Members of the United Nations have implemented the 1993 SNA. About 65 per cent of GDP of this group is thus estimated according to the 1993 SNA. In Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), only one country has implemented the 1993 SNA. Africa is the region with the second-lowest implementation rate (15 per cent). Weighted by GDP and population, 1993 SNA implementation in Africa covers only 29 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively. For Latin America and the Caribbean and for Asia, the rates of implementation are significantly higher. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 36 per cent of the States Members of the United Nations, accounting for 89 per cent of GDP in the region, comply with the 1993 SNA. In East, South and South-East Asia, 35 per cent of the States Members of the United Nations, accounting for 65 per cent of regional GDP, comply with the 1993 SNA. In Western

Asia, 40 per cent of the States Members of the United Nations, accounting for only 36 per cent of GDP of the region, have implemented the 1993 SNA.

Table 3
Assessment of conceptual implementation of the 1993 SNA in all countries and territories

	Number of countries	*Number of countries that implemented the 1993 SNA*	*Percentage of countries that implemented the 1993 SNA*	*Implementation weighted by population (percentage)*	*Implementation weighted by GDP (percentage)*
All countries and territories[a]	207	84	40.6	55.8	91.6
All States Members of the United Nations	191	82	42.9	55.9	91.9
Developed[b]	28	22	78.6	99.1	98.9
Transition economies	27	25	92.6	96.4	98.2
Developing	136	35	25.7	45.1	65.0
Africa	53	8	15.1	11.4	28.6
Latin America and the Caribbean	33	12	36.4	80.9	88.6
Western Asia	15	6	40.0	39.3	35.5
East, South-East, South Asia	23	8	34.8	48.3	65.2
Oceania	12	1	8.3	73.1	47.6

[a] Including Anguilla, Aruba, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cook Islands, French Guyana, French Polynesia, Guadeloupe, Holy See, Martinique, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, New Caledonia, Puerto Rico and Réunion as territories.

[b] Countries of Western Europe, United States of America, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

29. In order to address the gaps and unevenness in SNA implementation across regions, member organizations of the Intersecretariat Working Group have continued to provide technical support and assisted capacity-building in national accounts compilation in developing countries. Between 2000 and 2003, technical workshops and seminars on SNA implementation and expert missions were conducted by several of the members of the Intersecretariat Working Group, focusing on Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

B. Scope of the accounts: adherence to the minimum requirement data set

30. With regard to the scope of implementation, the Intersecretariat Working Group has proposed a defined benchmark called the minimum requirement data set (MRDS). In addition, a *recommended* and a *desirable* data set were proposed in order to facilitate assessments beyond the threshold of the benchmark. Details on the MRDS, and recommended and desirable data sets are included for reference purposes in annex II. The Statistical Commission approved the new benchmark at its thirty-second session[6] and called for an assessment of the MRDS based on the United Nations national accounts database. Some members of the Commission

preferred that the assessment of the MRDS be conducted in addition to, rather than as a replacement for, the earlier "milestone" measure for the scope of available data (see annex III for the presentation of the milestones). This report presents for the second time a scope analysis based on the MRDS benchmark. It focuses on the MRDS but, in addition, partly employs the earlier milestone measure to facilitate comparison of the two measures.

31. The scope assessment is based only on the national accounts database administered by the Statistics Division, which consists of the data officially submitted by countries to the Statistics Division, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on the basis of the new annual United Nations national accounts questionnaire (NAQ). This new NAQ, which was approved by the Commission and has been used since October 1999, reflects the 1993 SNA format. The new NAQ is geared towards collecting data needed for global and regional analysis rather than for national analysis. Its introduction aimed at reducing the volume of data requested from countries. Therefore, the new NAQ does not cover the full scope of the accounts and tables outlined in the 1993 SNA. It does not include data on the supply and use tables and the balance sheets. Neither does it include quarterly data, which are collected by IMF. Because of these circumstances, the following limitations exist in assessing 1993 SNA implementation by Member States based on the new NAQ:

(a) With regard to the six milestones, the implementation of milestones 5 and 6 cannot be measured since the new NAQ does not include tables for the other changes in assets accounts and balance sheets which constitute milestone 6, and the data for financial accounts of all institutional sectors have not yet been fully implemented in the database to enable the assessment of milestone 5;

(b) The assessment of the three data sets (namely, minimum requirement, recommended and desirable) can be carried out fully only for the implementation of the minimum requirement benchmark. The recommended and desirable data sets cannot be assessed because quarterly accounts and supply and use tables are not included in the new NAQ.

32. Acknowledging the limitations stated above, paragraphs 33-34 below present the results of a scope assessment conducted in autumn 2003 on the data submitted by the States Members of the United Nations. In the assessment, the MRDS was used as the relevant benchmark. For comparison, results of the milestone measurement (levels 1 and 2) are given in columns 13-16 of tables 4 and 5. The current analysis is based on the observation period 1996-2001. For comparison, table 5 shows the results of the scope assessment reported to the Commission at its thirty-second session in 2001, which covered the observation period 1993-1998 (E/CN.3/2001/8).

33. The method employed to produce the results in tables 4 and 5 consisted of the following procedure: for every national accounts table of the NAQ, a set of most important items was determined. If at least 50 per cent of these critical items had been submitted to the United Nations for a given table for at least one fiscal year in the observation period, then the table was counted as "available". For the examination of the MRDS, table 4.1 of the NAQ (Full sequence of accounts for the total economy) was considered in conjunction with table 1.3 (Relations among product, income, savings and net lending aggregates). The latter contains identical core items but is more frequently available. As in the assessment presented in 2001, the milestone analysis was based on the definitions of the milestones set in 1997.[7]

Table 4

Availability of the tables of the "minimum requirement data set" and milestone levels 1 and 2 for States Members of the United Nations, 1996-2001

Fiscal years 1996-2001 (Assessment 2003)	*Tables of the minimum requirement data set*								*Six or more tables*	*Percentage of total*	*Seven tables*	*Percentage of total*	*Milestone level*			
	Total	*1.1*	*1.2*	*2.1*	*2.2*	*2.3*	*1.3/4.1*	*4.2*					*One or higher*	*Percentage of total*	*Two or higher*	*Percentage of total*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*16*
	Number of countries[a]															
States Members of the United Nations	191	140	112	137	130	78	104	68	78	41	47	25	137	72	104	54
Developed[b]	28	25	25	23	20	23	24	24	23	82	20	71	23	82	23	82
Transition economies	27	25	20	26	22	7	17	12	13	48	5	19	25	93	18	67
Developing	136	90	67	88	88	48	63	32	42	31	22	16	89	65	63	46
Africa	53	28	22	25	24	14	17	8	10	19	8	15	26	49	16	30
Latin America and the Caribbean	33	29	22	27	29	17	24	11	15	45	8	24	30	91	24	73
Western Asia	15	13	9	13	12	10	10	4	8	53	2	13	13	87	10	67
East, South-East, South Asia	23	17	13	19	19	7	11	8	8	35	4	17	17	74	12	52
Oceania	12	3	1	4	4	0	1	1	1	8	0	0	3	25	1	8

[a] Including Switzerland and Timor-Leste, which became States Members of the United Nations after 2000.

[b] Countries of Western Europe, United States of America, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

Table 5

Availability of the tables of the "minimum requirement data set" and milestone levels 1 and 2 for States Members of the United Nations, 1993-1998

Fiscal years 1993-1998 (Assessment 2000)	*Total*	*Tables of the minimum requirement data set*								*Six or more tables*	*Percentage of total*	*Seven tables*	*Percentage of total*	*Milestone level*			
		1.1	*1.2*	*2.1*	*2.2*	*2.3*	*1.3/4.1*	*4.2*						*One or higher*	*Percentage of total*	*Two or higher*	*Percentage of total*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*		*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*16*
	Number of countries																
States Members of the United Nations	189	122	94	120	114	43	74	56		44	23	24	13	122	65	84	44
Developed[a]	27	23	23	23	19	20	23	19		19	70	16	59	23	85	23	85
Transition economies	27	22	16	23	19	5	12	10		6	22	0	0	22	81	14	52
Developing	135	77	55	74	76	18	39	27		19	14	8	6	77	57	47	35
Africa	53	22	14	20	20	2	7	7		4	8	1	2	21	40	11	21
Latin America and the Caribbean	33	24	19	23	25	6	12	8		4	12	3	9	25	76	15	45
Western Asia	15	13	9	14	12	5	8	6		5	33	2	13	13	87	8	53
East, South-East, South Asia	22	17	13	17	18	5	11	5		6	27	2	9	17	77	12	55
Oceania	12	1	0	0	1	0	1	1		0	0	0	0	1	8	1	8

[a] Countries of Western Europe, United States of America, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

34. The MRDS consists of seven tables of the new NAQ as shown in tables 4 and 5 above. The analysis for the period 1996-2001 produced the following results for the 191 States Members of the United Nations:

(a) Compared with the assessment done in 2001, data availability has improved. Now 47 countries (25 per cent) have fulfilled the MRDS benchmark, and 78 (41 per cent) have compiled six or more tables of the defined data set. In the 2001 assessment, these values had been 24 (13 per cent) and 44 (23 per cent), respectively;

(b) The milestone measure exhibits improved results.[8] Now 137 countries (72 per cent) meet or exceed level 1, and 104 (54 per cent) meet or exceed level 2. In the 2001 assessment, these values amounted to 122 (65 per cent) and 84 (44 per cent), respectively. By now, in seven of the nine defined regions or country groups more than 75 per cent of the countries in the region or group have achieved milestone 1;

(c) Developing and transition economies have significantly increased their implementation levels over the last few years. Particularly the MRDS measure has shown strong improvement;

(d) Among the developing countries, implementation levels for the individual tables have been lowest in Oceania and Africa. Among the developing regions, Western Asia has shown the highest implementation levels for all tables.

It should be noted that the reported results reflect both an improvement in the 1993 SNA implementation in States Members of the United Nations and improved reporting, that is to say, the submission of more up-to-date statistics by the countries to the Statistics Division database. It is currently not possible to separate the two causes and measure their individual impact on data availability.

C. Data quality assessment in national accounts

35. To assist in formulating strategies to improve data quality, IMF has developed a framework for assessing the quality of national accounts and other macroeconomic statistics. The framework provides a structure and common language for best practices as well as internationally accepted concepts and definitions. The framework follows a cascading structure that begins with a set of prerequisites and five dimensions of quality: integrity, methodological soundness, accuracy and reliability, serviceability and accessibility.

36. Since 2001, IMF has used the framework as a tool for preparing the data module of Reports on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSCs) for its member States. These ROSCs cover major macroeconomic data sets, including national accounts. To date, about 26 such data modules have been prepared, of which 23 have been posted on the IMF web site. IMF aims at continuing to prepare ROSCs for data for approximately 15 countries per year. The data quality assessment framework is kept up to date, reflecting best statistical practices as they evolve and reinforcing the links with work by other organizations in this domain.

III. Points for discussion

37. The Commission may wish to express its views on the following points:

(a) The detailed work programme for the 2008 update of the 1993 SNA, its governance and decision-making process, the roles of the main actors in the updating process, and the mechanisms put in place to ensure a broad engagement of member countries;

(b) The progress of member countries in the 1993 SNA implementation in terms of compliance, scope and quality.

Notes

[1] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4.

[2] Washington, D.C., International Monetary Fund (IMF), 1993.

[3] Washington, D.C., IMF, 2001.

[4] Washington, D.C., IMF, 2000.

[5] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 4* (E/2001/24), chap. III, para. 19 (a).

[6] Ibid., para. 19 (b).

[7] See background paper prepared for the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session, 11-14 February 1997, under agenda item 9.

[8] The milestone measure delivers better results than the MRDS because the definition used for the milestone assessment by the United Nations Statistics Division requires either current *or* constant price estimates for GDP by expenditure and industry breakdowns. Moreover, the definition of milestone levels 1 and 2 does not require table 2.3 of the NAQ, while the MRDS does.

Annex I

Implementation of the 1993 SNA: compliance with 1993 SNA concepts

Does your country's reported national accounts data currently include estimates for:

	Yes	No	Partly (specify)	Not applicable
Elements affecting the level of gross domestic product (GDP)				
GROSS CAPITAL FORMATION (GCF)/OUTPUT				
1. Is government defence expenditure on fixed assets that can be used for civilian purposes included in GCF?				
2. Is consumption of fixed capital included on all government fixed assets (airfields, roads, hospitals, docks, dams and breakwaters and other forms of construction)?				
3. Is all successful mineral exploration capitalized?				
4. Is all unsuccessful mineral exploration capitalized?				
5. Are purchases of computer software included in GCF?				
6. Is expenditure on software development on own account and for sale included in GCF and output?				
7. Is expenditure on entertainment, literary or artistic originals included in GCF and on their development included in output?				
8. Is expenditure on valuables included in GCF?				
9. Is the natural growth of cultivated forests included in output and GCF?				
10. Is financial intermediation services indirectly measured (FISIM) allocated to users?*				
11. 1993 SNA extends the production boundary of households to include goods that are not made from primary goods – are these goods included in output?				
12. 1993 SNA extends the production boundary of households to include all goods that are produced by households whether for sale or not – are these goods included in output?				
VOLUME ESTIMATES				
13. Are volumes estimated using a chaining procedure at least on an annual basis?				
SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS/INSURANCE				
14. Are unfunded social contributions (for sickness, unemployment, retirement etc.) by enterprises imputed as compensation of employees and included as contributions to social insurance?				
15. Do non-life insurance estimates include premium supplements rather than being based just on premiums less claims?				
16. Do life insurance estimates include premium supplements rather than being based just on premiums less claims?				
Elements affecting gross national income (GNI)				
17. Are reinvested earnings estimates included in the rest of the world account?				
18. Are foreign workers' remittances excluded from GNI?				
Elements not affecting the level of GDP/GNI				
VALUATION OF OUTPUT AND VALUE ADDED				
19.a Is output and value added measured at basic prices?*				
19.b Is output and value added measured at producers' prices?*				
19.c Is value added measured at factor cost?* (not part of the 1993 SNA)				
FINAL CONSUMPTION				
20. Is government final consumption expenditure broken down into individual and collective consumption?				
Status of implementation of the 1993 SNA				
21. If the 1993 SNA has not been implemented in officially reported national accounts, when does the country plan to implement and release the data based on the 1993 SNA? (Specify the year.)				

* These questions are raised for information only as the 1993 SNA allows alternative treatments.

Annex II

Scope of the compilation of 1993 SNA tables and accounts

SNA segments		Annual accounts	Quarterly accounts
Table number in NAQ	Name of SNA segment		
Value added, GDP and employment			
2.1	Value added and GDP in current prices by industry	Min req't	Recomm
2.2	Value added and GDP in constant prices by industry	Min req't	Recomm
1.1	Expenditures of the GDP in current prices	Min req't	Recomm
1.2	Expenditures of the GDP in constant prices	Min req't	Recomm
2.3	Value-added components by industry, current prices	Min req't	Desirable
	Employment by industry	Min req't	Recomm
Integrated accounts and tables, including integrated satellite accounts			
1.3/4.1	Accounts for the total economy	Min req't	Recomm
	Supply and use table	Recomm	Desirable
5.1	Cross-classification of output/value added by industries and sectors	Recomm	
	Integrated economic accounts	Recomm	
	Tourism accounts	*	
	Environmental accounts	*	
	Social accounting matrices Other socio-economic accounts	*	
Purpose classification of expenditures			
3.1	General government final consumption (and other) expenditure by purpose in current prices	Recomm	
	General government final consumption expenditure by purpose at constant prices	*	
3.2	Individual consumption (and other) expenditures by purpose in current prices	Recomm	
	Individual consumption expenditures by purpose at constant prices	*	
	Purpose classification of intermediate and final consumption across all sectors	*	

Sector accounts (until net lending)			
4.2	Rest of the world accounts (until net lending)	Min req't	Recomm
4.3	Non-financial corporations sector accounts (until net lending)	*	
4.4	Financial corporations accounts (until net lending)	Recomm	
4.5	General government sector accounts (until net lending)	Recomm	
4.6	Household sector accounts (until net lending)	*	
4.7	Non-profit institutions serving households sector accounts (until net lending)	*	
Financial and capital stock accounts and tables			
4.1-4.7	Financial accounts for all sectors	*	
	Balance sheets, revaluation and volume changes in asset accounts	*	
	Asset accounts for financial assets	*	
	Asset accounts for produced assets	*	
	Asset accounts for non-produced assets	*	

Note: The following terms and symbol are used in annex II:
Min req't: Table is required before 1993 SNA is considered to be implemented.
Recomm: Highly recommended for compilation by all countries.
Desirable: Useful data that should be compiled if possible.
* Other data sets that would count in assessing the degree of 1993 SNA implementation. Tables shown without a number are not included in the annual United Nations questionnaire.

Annex III

Milestones

Phase 1	Basic indicators of gross domestic product (GDP)	Final expenditures on GDP at current and constant prices; GDP by industry at current and constant prices[a]
Phase 2	Gross national income and other primary indicators	External account of primary incomes and current transfers, capital and financial accounts for the rest of the world
Phase 3	Institutional sector accounts: first steps	Production accounts for all institutional sectors; generation of income, allocation of primary income, secondary distribution of income, use of income, capital and financial accounts for general government
Phase 4	Institutional sector accounts: intermediate steps	Generation of income, allocation of primary income, secondary distribution of income, use of income, capital accounts for all institutional sectors other than general government
Phase 5	Institutional sector accounts: last of the transaction accounts	Financial accounts for all institutional sectors other than general government
Phase 6	Other flow accounts and balance sheets	Other changes in assets accounts for all institutional sectors; balance sheets

[a] The assessment of 2000, presented to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-second session in 2001, so relaxed this definition as to require only current *or* constant prices for each of the GDP compilation approaches, not both. For the current assessment, this relaxed definition has been maintained to facilitate comparison with the previous results.

Annex IV*

Manuals, handbooks and supporting materials for SNA implementation prepared by member organizations of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA)

Manuals, handbooks, compilation manuals and software in support of national accounts compilation	*Responsible ISWGNA member organization*	*Status*	*Date of publication/issue*
1. Use of Macro Accounts in Policy Analysis	UNSD	Published	2002
2. Handbook on Non-profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts (in cooperation with Johns Hopkins University, United States of America)	UNSD	Published	2003
3. Government Finance Statistics Manual (revision of the 1986 Manual)	IMF	Published	2001
4. National Accounts: A Practical Introduction	UNSD	Submitted for publication	2003
5. Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting for Fisheries (in cooperation with FAO and UNU)	UNSD	Submitted for publication	2003
6. Manual on Sources and Methods for the Compilation of ESA 95 Financial Accounts	Eurostat	Published	2002
7. Quarterly National Accounts Manual	IMF	Published (English, Spanish, French and Russian versions)	2001-2002
8. International Merchandise Trade: Statistics Compilers' Manual	UNSD	Submitted for publication	2003
9. Classification by Broad Economic Categories	UNSD	Published	2003
10. Handbook on Price and Volume Measures in National Accounts	Eurostat	Available on Eurostat web site	2001
11. Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework (in cooperation with Intersecretariat Working Group on the Tourism Satellite Account)	WTO/OECD/ Eurostat/UNSD	Published	2001
12. Measuring Capital: OECD Manual: Measurement of Capital Stocks, Consumption of Fixed Capital and Capital Services (in cooperation with Canberra Group on Capital Stock Statistics)	OECD	Published	2001
13. Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services (in cooperation with United Nations Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services)	Eurostat/IMF/OECD/ UNSD/UNCTAD/ WTO	Published	2002

* The long form of the acronyms used in the present annex are given in the appendix.

Manuals, handbooks, compilation manuals and software in support of national accounts compilation	*Responsible ISWGNA member organization*	*Status*	*Date of publication/issue*
14. Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting 2003 (in cooperation with the London Group on Environmental Accounting)	European Commission/IMF/ OECD/UNSD/World Bank	Submitted for publication	2003
15. OECD Productivity Manual: A Guide to the Measurement of Industry-level and Aggregate Productivity Growth (www.oecd.org/subject/growth/prod-manual.pdf)	OECD	Published	2001
16. OECD Handbook on Deflators for Information Technology Products	OECD	Forthcoming	2003
17. Measuring the Non-Observed Economy: A Handbook (www.oecd.org/publications/e-book/3002051E.pdf)	OECD/IMF/ILO/CIS	Published	2002
18. Guidelines on Income Distribution (in cooperation with the Canberra Group on Household Income Statistics)	OECD	Published	2002
19. Updates and amendments to the System of National Accounts, 1993 (including financial derivatives, functional classification and SNA glossary)	Eurostat/IMF/OECD/ United Nations/ World Bank	Submitted for publication	2003
20. Consumer Price Index Manual (by the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics)	Eurostat/IMF/ILO/ OECD/ECE	Forthcoming	2003
21. Producer Price Index Manual (by Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics)	Eurostat/IMF/ILO/ OECD/ECE	Forthcoming	2003
22. ISIC User's Guide (in cooperation with United Nations Technical Subgroup to the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications)	UNSD	Work in progress	2003
23. Update of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC, Rev.3.1) (in cooperation with United Nations Technical Subgroup to the Expert Group on the International Economic and Social Classifications)	UNSD	Submitted for publication	2003
24. Update of the Central Product Classification (CPC, Ver.1.1) (in cooperation with United Nations Technical Subgroup to the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications)	UNSD	Submitted for publication	2003
25. International Comparison Project (ICP) Handbook	World Bank	Work in progress	Web version/draft, 2003; final, 2005
26. Non-observed Economy in National Accounts: Survey of National Practices	ECE	Forthcoming	2003

Appendix

Explanatory note on the acronyms used in annex IV

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ESA	European System of Accounts
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Communities
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICP	International Comparison Project
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities
ISWGNA	Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
UNU	United Nations University
WTO	World Tourism Organization